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Housekeepers' Chat Fri., Feb. 10

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Betty Lou Plans Her First Meal." Approved by Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Bulletins available, for those interested in meal-planning: "A Guide to Good Meals for the Junior Homemaker."

--ooOoo--

It was on a chilly Saturday morning, a year ago, that Betty Lou asked me to come out and spend the day with her. Betty Lou's parents, and her big brother, were to be gone all day. As Betty Lou said, "all day" is such a long, long time, on a chilly, bleak Saturday.

"Betty Lou," said Betty Lou's mother, before she left home, "be a good girl, and help Aunt Sammy get dinner. You'll find plenty of vegetables in the store-room, and there's round steak in the ice box."

As soon as her mother and father and big brother had left, Betty Lou turned to me. "Aunt Sammy," said Betty Lou, "I don't want to help you get dinner. I want to get dinner all by myself. Mother thinks I'm too young, to get a meal all by myself. But I'm sure I can, if you'll help me decide what to cook, and if I don't have to fix too many things all at once."

So it was decided, that Betty Lou was to plan and cook dinner, all by herself, and surprise her mother and father. "They think I'm still a child," confined Betty Lou, "but I'll show them!

As the first step, I suggested that Betty Lou get a pencil and paper, and plan a well-balanced meal -- one that could be easily prepared.

"What's a well-balanced meal, Aunt Sammy?" asked Betty Lou.

"A well-balanced meal," I explained, "is a combination of the five main groups of foods, in the right proportions. We want our well-balanced meal to be attractive, and appetizing."

"But Aunt Sammy," said Betty Lou, "I can't plan a well-balanced meal, because I have never even heard of the five main groups of food."

Betty Lou's expression was so woebegone that I hastened to assure her that she could learn the five main groups of food, in no time at all, if she'd write them down. This is the list that I gave Betty Lou, so that she might understand the principles of meal planning. All ready, for the five main groups of food.

Group I. Vegetables and fruits. Vegetables and fruits are rich in mineral matter, which we must have for bones, and teeth, and to keep the body in good working order. Fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, too, necessary for normal growth; and bulks material, which prevents constipation.

Group II includes the efficient-protein foods. Efficient-protein foods are milk, eggs, cheese, meats, poultry and fish. All these foods contain protein. We call it "efficient protein" because it is used to build new tissues, and repair old tissues.

Next, Group III. Group III includes the cereal foods-- rice, barley, wheat and corn; breakfast foods, hominy, flour, meal, bread, crackers, macaroni, even toast and biscuits. The starch in these foods is used as fuel. It keeps the body warm, and supplied with energy. Some of the cereals-- corn, for instance-- contain fat. Whole-grain cereals supply roughage, minerals, and vitamins.

Now we're ready for Group IV. Group IV includes sweets, which are also used as fuel. In this group we place sugar, honey, molasses, sirups, jellies, rich preserves, candy, and so forth. We need to guard against eating too much sweet food, especially before meals, or our appetites will be so dulled that we won't eat our proper share of other foods. Some dried fruits, such as figs, raisins, prunes, and dates, might also be included in Group IV. They can often be used instead of other sweets, and they are valuable for the minerals they contain.

The last group-- Number V-- includes the fats and fat foods, such as butter, cream, lard suet, table oils, salt pork, bacon, chocolate, and nuts. All these foods are used as fuel. Fats are the most concentrated of all the foods. Some fats, expecially butter and cream, are sources of vitamins. Others, like chocolate, contain minerals.

The five main groups of foods, then, are: First, Vegetables and Fruits; second, Efficient-Protein Foods; third, Cereal Foods; fourth, Sweets; and fifth, Fats and Fat Foods. These five groups, combined in the right proportions, make what we call "well-balanced" meals.

And what do we mean by the "right proportions"?

As a general rule, Group I, or Vegetables and Fruits, should furnish one-fifth of the fuel our bodies need; Efficient-Protein foods, one-fourth; Cereal Foods, one-fourth; Sweets, only one-tenth; and Fats and Fat Foods, one-fifth. People who do very heavy muscular work, may need a larger proportion of the cereals, sweets, and fatty foods.

In planning the day's meals, it is not necessary that every meal include every group of foods, but each group should be represented in the daily diet.

Betty Lou faithfully copied all the meal-planning information in her notebook,and then, together, we worked out this meal: Brown Stew; Baked Potatoes; Buttered Peas and Carrots; Chow-chow; and Baked Apples Stuffed with Nuts and Raisins.

You can see that with this menu there is nothing to prepare at the last minute, and no two dishes have to be prepared at the same time. The Brown Stew (the recipe for which I'll give you in a few minutes) required long, slow cooking, so Betty Lou started the stew first. Then she scrubbed the potatoes, scraped and diced the carrots, and cored the apples.

Six o'clock is the dinner hour in Betty Lou's home. At five o'clock-- since Betty Lou could not wait a minute longer -- the potatoes and apples went into the oven, together.

I don't suppose any baked potatoes were ever prepared as carefully as were Betty Lou's. They were scrubbed till every speck and spot disappeared. Then they were wiped dry, and placed on a medium rack, in a fairly hot oven. We tested them occasionally, loosening the skin with the tips of our fingers, so the potatoes would cook through. When they were done, Betty Lou made a cross-shaped slit in each potato, with a knife. Then, with a towel over her hand, she forced a little of the potato up through the slit, so the steam could escape. Just before the potatoes were served, they were sprinkled lightly with paprika, and a dot of butter was placed in the center of each.

The apples were placed in a baking dish. Then the holes were filled with sugar, butter, raisins, a few drops of lemon juice, and a few chopped nuts. Just enough water was added to keep the apples from sticking. Then the baking dish was covered so that the steam might help do the cooking. The apples were done before the potatoes were, and had a chance to cool somewhat, before they were served.

What else did we serve? Buttered Peas and Carrots. "Easy as abc," was Betty Lou's comment, about <u>this</u> dish. The carrots were scraped, cut into very small pieces, and cooked until tender-- about 20 minutes. Then they were drained, combined with canned peas, and cooked five minutes longer.

I shall give you the recipe for Brown Stew of Beef, which Betty Lou followed. Six ingredients, for Brown Stew of Beef:

1-1/2 pounds round steak	1 teaspoon salt
3 cups water	2 tablespoons chopped parsley, and
1 to 2 teaspoons grated onion	Flour

I'll repeat the six ingredients, for Brown Stew of Beef: (Repeat)

Select a good piece of round steak, wipe, and cut it into small, uniform, pieces. Roll in flour, and sear in an iron skillet, in some of the fat from the steak. Then place it in a covered saucepan, add the water, and simmer until tender. Add the onion and salt. Measure the liquid. To each cup, allow 3 tablespoons of flour, for browning. To brown the flour, put it into a clean smooth, skillet, over medium heat, and stir the flour constantly, until it becomes well browned. Mix the browned flour with the broth, add the meat and parsley, and cook until the gravy has thickened.

The flour can also be browned in the oven, stirring now and then so that it does not scorch. If one is expecially fond of the browned flavor, a quantity of flour can be prepared, and stored for use as needed.

To repeat the menu: Brown Stew of Beef; Baked Potatoes; Buttered Peas and Carrots; Chow-chow; and Baked Apples Stuffed with Nuts and Raisins.

I must tell you what happened when Betty Lou's parents, and big brother Bob, came home, promptly at 6 o'clock. Dinner was on the table-- steaming hot.

"Gee, dinner smells good!" said Betty Lou's father, as he pulled off his boots.

"I hope my little girl did her share of the work-- set the table, and put the chairs up," said Betty Lou's mother, critically.

"Let's eat," said Bob. "When Betty Lou grows up, perhaps she can cook a meal as good as this. How about it, Betty?"

Well, everybody looked at Betty Lou, and what do you think? The child had all she could do, to keep the tears back. We had to tell our secret then, and I was proud of the way Betty Lou's family rallied'round, and praised the little girl for her very first dinner.

Betty Lou is almost thirteen now, and she has planned and cooked more meals during the past year, than she can keep track of. Sometime next week, if she doesn't object, I'll give you another of Betty Lou's dinners.

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